FILM AS A SUBVERSIVE ART

By

Amos Vogel

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From its inception, cinema has been a major and appropriate target of censors, traditionalists and the state. As a result, public cinema has often found it difficult to openly display some of our most fundamental experiences. This was due to the censor's fear of the powerful impact of film, especially when manipulated by aesthetic and ideological innovators and rebels. But today, neither fear nor repression seem able to stem an accelerating world-wide trend toward a more liberated cinema, in which all previously forbidden subjects are boldly explored.

This book traces the evolution of cinema's taboos into its new freedom, examining film content and form, thematic tendencies and styles from a sociological, psychological and aesthetic point of view.

Technical Aspects

The book will consist of approximately 28 chapters, of which each will contain a 2000 - 3000 word essay regarding its subject matter, as well as descriptions of approximately ten films (about 500 words each), together with approximately 20 stills per chapter.

In keeping with the subject matter of the book, typography and layout should be extremely modern and imaginative.

Considering the nature of the book and the large number of stills (which must be prominently displayed, one or at most two per page), the format will have to be larger than usual (perhaps 8" x 10"), provided this will not prevent a paperback edition which is essential for the educational market.

Estimated length: 150,000 words and approximately 500 - 600 stills.

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A. THE SETTING:

1. The Nature of the Film Experience

2. The Power of the Visual Taboo

B. WEAPONS OF SUBVERSION: FORBIDDEN SUBJECTS OF THE CINEMA

3. The Attack on Puritanism: Nudity

The figleaves crumble, but not the Republic; early first steps - and full revelation; suppression superseded by casual acceptance.

Films:

PAINT (Norman Gollin)
LAUGHING BEAR (Mark Sadan)
THE BED (James Broughton)
BETTO BOOP'S BAMBOO ISLAND
GEOGRAPHY OF THE BODY (Willard Maas)
THE GOLDEN POSITIONS (James Broughton)
L'OPERA MOUFFE (Agnes Varda)
HALLUCINATIONS (Peter Weiss)
ECSTASY (Gustav Machatn)

4. The End of Sexual Taboos: Erotic & Pornographic Cinema

The American avant-garde provides ideology and examples; the effect on commercial cinema; mechanical and sensuous eroticism.

Films:

PSYCHOMONTAGE (Drs. Eberhard & Phyllis Kronhausen)
UNFOLDING (Constance Beeson)
SHADOW OF AN APPLE (Lapoujade)
LOVEMAKING (Stan Brakhage)
KISS (Andy Warhol)
PAPA AND MAMA (Karl Kren)
I AM CURIOUS YELLOW (Vilgot Sjoman)
WEEKEND (Jean-Luc Godard)
THE NONE STORY (Anonymous)
HISTORY OF THE BLUE MOVIE (Alexander de Renzy)
ELECTROSEX (Anonymous)
HOLD ME WHILE I'M NAKED (George Kuchar)
AND GOD CREATED WOMAN (Roger Vadim)

5. The End of Sexual Taboos: Homosexuality and other Variants

From symbolic representation to total visual disclosure; the acceptance of sexual diversity; visual shock denoting hidden prejudices.

Films:

CHANT D'AMOUR (Jean Genet)
FIREWORKS (Kenneth Anger)
FLAMING CREATURES (Jack Smith)
FLESH OF MORNING (Stan Brakhage)
BLOW JOB (Andy Warhol)
THE QUEENS (Frank Simon)
MY HUSTLER (Andy Warhol)
SODOMA (Karl Kren)
WHY NOT? (Arakawa)

6. The First Mystery: Birth

The mysterious beginning of life as seen by doctors, poets, and the new, radical pantheists.

Films:

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A CAT (Alexander Hammid-Maya Deren)
WINDOW WATER BABY MOVING (Stan Brakhage)
THIGH LINE LYRE TRIANGULAR (Stan Brakhage)
KIRSA NICHOLINA (Gunvar Nelson)
ALL MY BABIES (George Stoney)
BEGINNINGS OF LIFE (Michael Solin)

7. The Ultimate Secret: Death, Man, Beast & Genocide

The reality of death on film; animal slaughter as metaphor; Buchenwald, Hiroshima and Vietnam; death as the ultimate secret.

Films:

NIGHT AND FOG (Alain Resnais)
JEUX DES ANGES (Walerian Borowczyk)
CAMPS OF THE DEAD (Allied cameramen)
DISTANT JOURNEY (Alfred Radok)
HIROSHIMA/NAGASAKI (Japanese cameramen)
THE WARGAME (Peter Watkins)
SIGHET (Elie Wiesel-Harold Becker)
DEATHDAY (Sergei Eisenstein)
THE WORLD OF APU (Satayit Ray)
THE BLOOD OF THE BEASTS (Georges Franju)
CORRIDA INTERDITE (Denys Colomb de Daunant)
DIABOLIQUE (G.Z. Clouzot)
VAMPYR (C.T. Dreyer)

8. The Attack on God: Blasphemy and Anti-Clericalism

Nothing is sacred to the desecrators; pained by the human condition, the international avant-garde questions God's existence and attacks his presumed earthly representatives.

Films:

LA RICOTTA (P. P. Pasolini)
SEASHELL AND CLERGYMAN (Germaine Delluc)
EVERY SEVENTH CHILD (Jack Willis)
LA RELIGIEUSE (Jacques Rivette)
THE IDEA (Berthold Bartosch)
L'AGE D'OR (Luis Bunuel-Salvador Dali)
VIRIDIANA (Luis Bunuel)
THE MIRACLE (Roberto Rossellini)

C. WEAPONS OF SUBVERSION: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Left Radicals and the Revolutionary Cinema

9. The Revolutionary Film Avant-Garde in Early Soviet Russia

Lenin and the cinema; rhythm, montage, juxtaposition as elements of film art; stylization and 'Typage'; the conflict between individual (bourgeois) drama and collective (revolutionary) film art; Vertov's experimental 'Kino Eye' movement; the abolition of the story film; a politically and esthetically revolutionary cinema.

Films:

STRIKE (Sergej Eisenstein)
THE MAN WITH THE MOVIE CAMERA (Dziga Vertov)
THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG (V.I. Pudovkin)
ARSENAL (Alexander Dovshenko)
BY THE LAWY(Leo Kuleshov)

10. East German and Cuban Propaganda Films

Films:

NOW (Santiago Alvarez)
HANOI NOVEMBER 13 (Santiago Alvarez)
THE LAUGHING MAN (Werner Heyman)
O.K. (Defa)
HOLIDAY ON SYLT (Walter Thorndyke)
PILOTS IN PAJAMAS (Walter Heynowski)

11. Cinema Novo and the Clandestine South American Cinema

Films:

ANTONIO-DAS-MORTES (Glauber Rocha)
LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS (Fernando Solanas)
YAWAR MALLKU
MACUNAIMA
LOS HERDEIROS (Carlos Fuegas)
CLANDESTINE DOCUMENTARY AND NEWSREELS

12. East European Attacks on Communist Law and Order

Films:

THE FUNERAL OF JAN PALACH (Anonymous)
JOSEF KILIAN (Pavel Juracek-Jan Schmidt)
COURAGE FOR EVERY DAY (Evald Schorm)
TWO MEN AND A WARDROBE (Roman Polanski)
WALK-OVER (Jerry Skolimowski)
DOM (Lenica Borowczyk)
WANDERING (Antonin Masa)
REPORT ON THE PARTY AND THE GUESTS (Jan Nemec)

13. Left-Wing and Revolutionary Cinema: The New Godard, Mao & Others

The sham of equality and justice and the reality of a class society, as seen by angry young film-makers. Godard breaks with his past; the attempt at a radical cinema that is not an art, but an act in the service of the revolution; the ultimate intractability of art.

Films:

MALCOLM X (Lebert Bethune)
UP AGAINST THE WALL, MISS AMERICA (Newsreel)
YIPPIE (Anonymous)
NO VIETNAMESE EVER CALLED ME NIGGER (David Weiss)
ELDRIDGE CLEAVER (William Klein)
EARLY WORKS (Zelimir Zilnik)
THE SEVENTEENTH PARALLEL (Joris Ivens)
FAR FROM VIETNAM (Alain Resnais, Godard, Marker, Varda)
PRAVDA (Jean-Luc Godard)
BLACK PANTHERS (Agnes Varda)
ZERO FOR CONDUCT (Jean Vigo)
PAISAN (Roberto Rossellini)
BATTLE OF ALGIERS (Gillo Pontecorvo)

Conservative and Fascist Cinema

14. The Terrible Poetry of the Nazi Cinema

Philosophy, psychology, and pathology of mass manipulation; the formation of national myths; pagan and ritual elements; collective man and

homosexual implications; the magic potential of film for propaganda.

Films:

TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (Leni Riefenstahl)
FUER UNS (Nsdap)
JUD SUESS (Veit Harlan)
THE ENERNAL JEW (Fritz Sieber)
OLYMPIA (Leni Riefenstahl)
NAZI PROPAGANDA AND NEWSREEL FILMS
HANS WESTMAR (Franz Wenzler)

15. U. S. Government Films and American Right-wing Films

Films:

COMMUNISTS ON CAMPUS (Harding College)
REVOLUTION UNDERWAY (Anonymous)
RITE OF LOVE AND DEATH (Yukio Mishima)
OUR COUNTRY (U.S. Department of Defense)
WHY WE ARE IN VIETNAM (U.S. Department of the Army)
GOING PLACES: THE STORY OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM (Fred Sutherland)

D. WEAPONS OF SUBVERSION: THE ESTHETIC DIMENSION

16. The Surrealist Heritage: The Cinema of Shock

Europe in decline; the rebellion against rationalism; the magic of dream; Freud and the discovery of the subconscious; automatic art; surrealism as anti-art.

Films:

UN CHIEN ANDALOU (Luis Bunuel-Salvador Dali)
THE WORLD OF PAUL DELVAUX (Henri Storck)
THE LEAD SHOES (Sidney Peterson)
MAGRITTE (Luc de Heusch)
THE RUNNING, JUMPING, STANDING STILL FILM (Richard Lester)
TWO TARS (Laurel & Hardy)
DUCK SOUP (Marx Brothers)

17. The Expressionist Heritage: The Cinema of Unrest

Exaggeration and stylization; the dynamics of irregularity and distortion; social sources of expressionism.

Films:

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (Robert Wiene)
PESTILENT CITY (Peter Goldman)

VISUAL TRAINING (Frans Swartjes)
WACHSFIGURENKABINETT (Paul Leni)
WILD STRAWBERRIES (Ingmar Bergmann)
FROM MORNING TO MIDNIGHT (Karl Heinz Martin)

18. Dada and Pop: Anti-Art?

The ambiguity and magic of the object; symbols and icons; the esthetics of expendability, chance, and reproducibility; Pop art as protest or acceptance.

Films:

ENTR'ACTE (Rene Clair)
SCIENCE FRICTION (Stan Vanderbeek)
FOTODEATH (Al Kouzel)
HOMAGE TO TINGUELY (Robert Breer)
HOUSE (Charles Eames)
COSMIC RAY (Bruce Conner)

19. The Destruction of Time and Space

Films:

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (Alain Resnais)
MURIEL (Alain Resnais)
A MOVIE (Bruce Conner)
STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA (Maya Deren)
GO SLOW ON THE BRIGHTON (Donald Smith)

20. The Destruction of Plot and Narrative

Films:

LE GAI SAVOIR (Jean-Luc Godard)
MADE IN USA (Jean-Luc Godard)
EARTH (Alexander Dovchenko)
THE POTTED PSALM (Sidney Peterson)

21. The Assault on Montage

Films:

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION (Bernardo Bertolucci)
BREATHLESS (Jean-Luc Godard)
WAVELENGTH (Michael Snow)
THE RED AND THE WHITE (Miklos Jansco)
EMPIRE (Andy Warhol)
SEE YOU AT MAO (Jean-Luc Godard)
TOUCH OF EVIL (Orson Welles)

22. Birth and Death of the Moving Camera

Films:

TRAINRIDE (Lutz Mommartz)
THE LAST MAN (F.W. Murnau)
OHAYO (Ozu)
VARIETY (F.W. Murnau)

23. Films Without Camera, Sound Without Musical Instruments

Films:

BE GONE DULL CARE (Norman McLaren)
A TRIP (Carmen D'Avino)
PEN POINT PERCUSSION (Norman McLaren)
MOTHLIGHT (Stan Brakhage)

24. The Elimination of Reality

Films:

H2O (Ralph Steiner)
BLACK TV (Aldo Tambellini)
ALLURES (Jordan Belson)
RAZORBLADES (Paul Sharits)
SYMPHONY DIAGONAL (Viking Eggeling)
NEW YORK, NEW YORK (Francis Thompson)
BLAZES (Robert Breer)
CHINESE FIREDRILL (Will Hindle)
INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY (H. Landow)

25. The Elimination of the Image

Films:

FLICKER (Tony Conrad)
ADEBAR (Peter Kubelka)
LA JETEE (Chris Marker)

26. Beyond Cinema: Intermedia, Videotape, Photography

E. THE WORLD VIEW OF SUBVERSIVE CINEMA

27. Relativity, Existentialism and Modern Art

Science increases complexity and mystery of reality; relativity of space, time and motion; the dethronement of man; Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy; the breakup of empires and ideologies; the message of Dachau and Hiroshima; the coldness of existentialism; the invasion of irrationality; the devaluation of language; cinema as the essence of modern art.

Films:

RASHOMON (Akira Kurasawa)
RELATIVITY (Ed Emshwiller)
THE SLUICE (Wolfgang Ramsbott)
BLUE MOSES (Stan Brakhage)
LOST IN CUDDAHY (Ira Schneider)
THE ECLIPSE (Michelangelo Antonioni)
M. VERDOUX (Charles Chaplin)
SATYRICON (Federico Fellini)

28. Toward a New Consciousness: The Liberated Cinema

Films:

BREATHING TOGETHER: REVOLUTION OF THE ELECTRIC FAMILY (Morley Markson)
SUMMERHILL
SOMETIMES I EVEN LIKE ME
TAOS AND THE COMMUNES
MOON (Scott Bartlett)
COSMOS (Jordan Belson)
20001 (Stanley Kubrick)

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